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"SPENSER'S EARLIEST TRANSLATIONS"

The question, first raised by Koeppel,¹ as to the authenticity of the translations from Bellay and Petrarch in Vander Noodt's "Theatre of Worldlings" (1569), has been answered again recently by Mr. L. S. Friedland in the "Journal of English and Germanic Philology" for July, 1913. Since the matter has been so brought up afresh, I should like to offer a few further remarks confirmatory.

In the first place, it may be observed that while Ponsonby certainly leaves the impression of his assuming responsibility for the make-up of the "Complaints," he also leaves us puzzled. It is odd, for instance, that he should have by himself "got into his hands" just these particular "smale poemes"—and no others—which proved to have unity, "being all complaints and meditations of the worlds vanitie, verie grave and profitable." It is also difficult to see by what process of inference the excellent Printer concludes that "sundrie others, namelie, *Ecclesiastes* and *Canticum Canticorum* translated, *A senights Slumber*, *The Hell of Lovers*, his *Purgatorie*, being all dedicated to ladies, so as it may seeme he ment them all to one volume." Why should Ponsonby think Spenser meant just these poems for a separate volume? Nearly all, if not all, the "Complaints" were also dedicated to ladies. And, on the other hand, any translation of "Ecclesiastes" would seem of necessity to be one more of the "complaints and meditations of the worlds vanitie, verie grave and profitable." The fact is, Ponsonby's rôle reminds one strongly of that of "E. K." in the "Calender," to wit, one of very *wise* ignorance. We can hardly doubt, I think, that the poet, certainly in London when the "Complaints" were "entered," was behind his publisher, and—as before with "E. K."—using him as at once a spokesman and a "blind."² And Spenser may have had the same reasons as before in preferring to shift, at any rate for the time being, responsibility for the publication. He *may* have feared the consequences of reissuing the already suppressed "Mother

¹ Ueber die Echtheit der Edmund Spenser zugeschriebenen "Visions of Petrarch" u. "Visions of Bellay". Eng. Stud. XV (1891).

² Cf. J. B. Fletcher: Spenser and "E. K." Mod. Lang. Notes, June, 1900.

Hubberds Tale," or he may have merely desired to await a favorable verdict on his new venture before acknowledging it, or he may even—aspiring courtier as he was—be affecting the disdain of aristocratic authors for making their accomplishments property of the common herd.

There is another matter making, I think, for the arrangement of the volume by Spenser himself. The three series of "visions"—"Visions of the Worlds Vanitie," "The Visions of Bellay," "The Visions of Petrarch"—follow without separate title-page "Muiopotmos." This has a title-page, and is inscribed to Elizabeth, Lady Carey. In Sonnet I of the "Visions of the Worlds Vanitie," Spenser says of his visions—

Such as they were (faire Ladie) take in worth,

That when time serves, may bring things better forth.

And in the last sonnet of the Petrarchan series—and of the volume—Spenser adds to the original envoy, translated as a quatrain in 1569, this apostrophe:

And ye, faire Ladie, in whose bounteous brest

All heavenly grace and vertue shrined is,

When ye these rythmes doo read, and vew the rest,

Loath this base world, and thinke of heavens blis:

And though ye be the fairest of Gods creatures,

Yet thinke, that death shall spoyle your goodly features.

Apart from their position as following "Muiopotmos" in the volume, these words conform very well to the tone and promise of the dedication to Lady Carey. For as the last words in the volume, they apply equally to the "Visions" and to the whole volume, so by "fortunate" ambiguity fulfilling his declaration of being "absolutely vowed to [her] services," and in so far justifying Nash's assertion two years later in "Christ's Tears over Jerusalem" that "Maister Spenser in all his writings he prizeth [her]."³ Moreover, the emphasis

³ Cf. P. W. Long: Spenser and Lady Carey. *Modern Language Rev.*, April 1908. In the epistle dedicating *Mother Hubberds Tale* to Lady Compton, Spenser says that he would present to her "these my idle labours; which having long sithens composed in the raw conceipt of my youth, I lately amongst other papers lighted upon, and was by others, which liked the same, mooved to set them forth." There follows without separate title-page the *Ruines of Rome*; then

upon her bounty, superlative beauty and *grace* fits Spenser's tributes elsewhere to Lady Carey.⁴ If Mr. Long is at all right in interpreting the exceedingly ardent dedication of "Muiopotmos," together with the uniquely prominent dedicatory-sonnet in the first instalment of "The Fairie Queene," as effectively a declaration of platonic service—another aristocratic pose of the poet—there would be a special fitness in Spenser's setting a climax to his praise in his revamped "Visions of Petrarch": they would imply Lady Carey to be his "Laura." Furthermore, a motive would thus be given for his working over of the early translations, and a reason for the omission of the four Apocalyptic "sonets." It would be manifestly indecorous in praise of milady to enlist the Scarlet Woman on her ugly Beast.

In theme and *genre*, a goodly number of the "Complaints" actually grew out of the early translations. The "Visions of the Worlds Vanitie" are manifestly suggested by the "Visions" from the "Theatre;" "The Ruines of Time" by "The Ruines of Rome." The motif of "Virgils Gnat" is the inverse of that of the "Visions of the Worlds Vanitie." The fortunes of the great are in the former made, in the latter marred, by the small. And again, "Muiopotmos" is in idea and form

comes the title-page of *Muiopotmos*, followed by that poem and the *Visions*. One would naturally expect the *Ruines of Rome* to be grouped with the *Visions of Bellay*, the two together making one poem. It would look as if the poet were distributing these minor pieces for good measure, as it were, to his main gift. Hence the phrase "this smal poëme" in the epistle dedicatory of *Muiopotmos* need not, as Mr. Buck thinks (*Pub. Mod. Lang. Assoc.* xxiii, p. 92), preclude the "Lady" of the *Visions* being the dedicatee of *Muiopotmos*. Similarly, Ponsonby dedicates to Sir Robart Needham the volume of 1595, entitled *Amoretti and Epithalamion*, but containing as well certain epigrams; yet in his epistle he mentions "these sweete conceited sonnets" only.

Furthermore the declaration to Lady Compton would seem to admit responsibility for the publication of the volume of *Complaints*. The letter could hardly apply to any original "uttering" of the poem, for its author speaks of having "long sithens composed [it] in the raw conceipt of my youth," and but "lately" having "lighted upon" it.

⁴Cf. Long, *op. cit.* Mr. Long (p. 259, note 1) assumes without argument that the "faire Ladie" of the "Visions" is Lady Carey.

obviously related to "Virgils Gnat." Such developments of themselves give a certain importance to those sub-freshman exercises.

As has been before pointed out,⁵ phrases and images thus early struck off lingered in Spenser's memory to be used anew later. I might cite two additional instances. Ll. 265-282 of "The Teares of the Muses" clearly echo Sonnet X of the "Visions of Bellay," as do stanzas four and five of the fourth canto of the first book of the "Faerie Queene" Sonet II of the same. Again, in "Faerie Queene," I, v, 49, there is allusion to

The antique ruins of the Romanes fall.

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⁵Cf. Friedland, *op. cit.*, p. 459, note 20.